

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 20, 2010

Senate Concurrent Resolution

No. 79

Introduced by Senator Denham

(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Mendoza)

February 22, 2010

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 79—Relative to Portuguese Heritage Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 79, as amended, Denham. Portuguese Heritage Month.

This bill would recognize the month of June as Portuguese Heritage Month.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, In September of 1542, Portuguese explorer João
2 Rodrigues Cabrillo sailed a ship into San Diego Bay and became
3 the first European to explore the land now known as California.
4 Cabrillo explored the California coast, and is credited with
5 numerous coastal discoveries; and
6 WHEREAS, Mathias de Sousa was the first Portuguese
7 immigrant on record, arriving in Maryland in 1634. Mr. de Sousa
8 and other early Portuguese immigrants came to the United States
9 to escape persecution because of their Jewish faith; and
10 WHEREAS, In 1870, Portuguese immigrants began arriving in
11 the United States in relatively large numbers. The majority of these
12 Portuguese immigrants were men from the Azores, who were
13 primarily recruited to work on American whaling ships and to
14 farm; and

1 WHEREAS, Many Portuguese Americans settled in the Santa
2 Clara and San Joaquin Valleys. The thriving agricultural industry
3 of the late 19th and 20th centuries virtually guaranteed a job for
4 anyone who was willing to work; and

5 WHEREAS, Between 1900 and 1940, as much as one-half of
6 the Portuguese community in California owned or operated a dairy
7 farm, worked on a dairy farm, or worked in a dairy-supporting
8 industry. Applying the Portuguese belief in hard work and
9 thriftiness, along with additional labor from family members, a
10 Portuguese settler could earn enough to reinvest in his business,
11 buying land and more dairy cows; and

12 WHEREAS, On Sundays, Portuguese Americans often
13 congregate to celebrate their native religious festivals. In particular,
14 they celebrate the Blessed Sacrament festival, the Holy Ghost
15 festival, the Santo Cristo festival, the Feast Day of Our Lady of
16 Fatima, and more recently, Dia de Portugal. These festivals provide
17 an opportunity for young children to experience the culture of their
18 ancestors who immigrated from Portugal. The festivals are famous
19 for good food, laughter, bloodless bull fights, art, and native
20 dances. In the San Joaquin and Santa Clara Valleys, large
21 gatherings and cultural events are held to celebrate the Portuguese
22 American contributions to California society; and

23 WHEREAS, In 1994, the University of California, Berkeley
24 established The Portuguese Studies Program. Included among the
25 many goals of the program is the goal “to spotlight the crucial and
26 complex but often overlooked experience and contributions of the
27 Portuguese American community”; and

28 WHEREAS, Among the great Portuguese Americans who have
29 contributed significantly to this country are: composer John Philip
30 Sousa, best known for composing “Stars and Stripes Forever”;
31 poet Emma Lazarus, best known for her sonnet about the Statue
32 of Liberty, “The New Colossus”; architect William L. Pereira, best
33 known for designing the Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco;
34 and singer and actress Carmen Miranda. Many Portuguese
35 Americans have also served with distinction in local, state, and
36 federal office; and

37 WHEREAS, Portuguese Americans have truly made valuable
38 and substantial contributions to every facet of California life.
39 Portuguese Americans continue to thrive in agricultural
40 communities of the Santa Clara and San Joaquin Valleys. The

1 Portuguese Heritage Society of California designated the second
2 Saturday of June as a day to celebrate Portuguese culture through
3 music, dance, art, cooking, parades, and other festivities; now,
4 therefore, be it

5 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
6 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature hereby declares June as
7 the month of celebrating Portuguese national heritage; and be it
8 further

9 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
10 this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

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